Majority of drugs already in Indian market including those in the "National List of Essential Medicines 2003" are off patent and their availability would not get effected by the new product patent regime.

Drug prices control measures are WTO compatible and the Government will continue to have powers to regulate the prices of medicines sold in the country. Provisions of "compulsory licensing" and "parallel imports" in the Patent Amendment Ordinance 2004 will help keep the prices of patented medicines within the common man's reach.

Protecting medicinal plants

†1931. SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have prepared that an action plan to protect the medicinal plants linked with indigenous unani system;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that multinational companies are getting Indian medicinal plants patented on a large scale; and

(d) the number of medicinal plants got patented by his Ministry and the number of Indian medicinal unani plants got patented by the foreign companies during last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) The Government has set up a Medicinal Plants Board with a view to co-ordinate all matters relating to medicinal plants, including drawing up policies and strategies for conservation, proper harvesting, cost-effective cultivation, research and development, processing, etc. in order to protect, sustain and develop this sector. The Schemes implemented by the Board provides for financial support for promotional activities and for captive cultivation of medicinal plants used in preparation of drugs under traditional systems of medicine including the Unani system.

(c) and (d) Plants and the knowledge about their medicinal usage in the public domain can not be patented. However, it is noticed that some individuals and companies in some of the foreign countries have been

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

given patents for the medicinal use of a number of Indian Medicinal plants. As there is no effective mechanism to know about the applications made for patents in the patent offices of other countries, it is not possible to indicate the number of patents granted for medicinal use of plants including those used in Unani medicine in foreign countries.

Free vaccination to children

1932. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have proposed to give free vaccination of all types to all children, just as polio is given, or give any assistance to State Governments in this regard;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (c) Government of India is providing vaccine free of cost to the States for implementation of Universal Immunization Programme for prevention of vaccine preventable diseases namely childhood tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles and neonatal tetanus. In addition, to eradicate polio, Government of India implements Pulse Polio Immunization Programme, under which State are provided:

(1) Oral Polio Vaccine in kind, and

(2) Operational expenses for implementing the programme.

National Maternity Benefit Scheme

1933. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether under National Maternity Benefit Scheme, an assistance of Rs. 500/- is being given to pregnant woman from BPL families for better nutrition; and

(b) if so, the number of beneficiaries in each State since its introduction, year-wise and State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Year-wise and State-wise estimated number of beneficiaries is at Statement.